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The Aalborg University Model of Problem Based Learning (PBL) unfolded within an interdisciplinary children's clinic at the Master program of psychology



AALBORG UNIVERSITET

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Introduction

Problem-based Learning (PBL) is applied in all study programmes at Aalborg University, with approximately half of the study activities consisting of project work in teams (2).

In 2012 Aalborg University's Clinic for Developmental Communication Disorders was launched as a PBL Master programme within the psychology programme providing students a clinical setting for their compulsory internship during their two year Master programme, after a three years bachelor programme in psychology. Following the principles of the Aalborg PBL model (3) students' work is anchored within the concrete challenges of children that grow up with a communication disorder and their families.

The objectives of the clinic are to ensure that students' work is exemplary and transferable to situations encountered in their future professional career as a psychologist, that the students are self-reflective and responsible for their own learning, and acquire the ability to work in a team. The clinic also serves to link a particular gap within the Danish society by offering a Dynamic Assessment approach to school-aged children (1).

Frame of the internship on the 2nd sem. and the roles held by each student

Each student:

- works within a **reflective team** of 4 students lead by two staff supervisors.
- is responsible of planning and executing **7 dynamic assessment sessions** with a school-aged child, that has a language or communication disorder.
- is responsible of providing **consultation** to the parents/families and carry out a **structured interview**.
- is responsible of on-line **observations** of student sessions.
- is responsible for the **technic** (video & microphone).
- writes final rapport and presents it to parents, teachers etc..
- receives **supervision** after each session.

All sessions are evaluated on-line by the reflective team though a one-way screen and video-recorded for use of supervision.

The programme, theories and methods

The theoretical departure of the clinic is motivated by **Dynamic Assessment**, e.g. Vygotsky's concept of mediation and the zone of proximal development (1). Dynamic assessment has been shown to be beneficial for children with language disorders (4). Students develop concrete therapeutic tools specifically constructed to fit the needs of the individual child and its' family.

The courses within the programme add up to a total of 55 ECTS-credit points (app. 1.375 work hours). The courses provide the student with relevant background knowledge concerning theory, practice and intervention with children and adolescents that grow up language or/and communication problems. The remaining courses are joint with students in the other Master programmes (See table 1).

Table 1. Overview of ECTS-credit points

	Courses within the children's clinic Master programme	Joint courses for all Master programmes
1 st semester	Advanced Applied Psychology I, 10 ECTS	Additional Applied Psychology I, 5, ECTS
1 st semester		The Psychological Profession, 5 ECTS
1 st semester		Psychological Testing 5, ECTS
1 st semester		Psychological Practice and Intervention Methods, 5 ECTS
2 nd semester	Advanced Applied Psychology II, 15 ECTS	
2 nd semester	Internship, 15 ECTS	
3 rd semester	Theory, Practice and Scientific Method, 15 ECTS	Research Methods: Potentials and Limitations, 5 ECTS
3 rd semester		2 Elective Courses, 10 ECTS (5 ECTS each)
4 th semester		Master's Thesis, 30 ECTS

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Qualitative examples of student's reflections on their learning:

The internship course is passed through active participation during 50 workdays and a 10-page reflective rapport of learning outcomes during the internship. The following citations are examples of students' descriptions of their learning outcomes:

- "I've discovered the importance of supervision and collaboration with co-students in finding solutions, which I would not have found on my own"
- "The largest and most challenging experience I gained from the clinic was having the role as the student-therapist.... the first sessions made me nervous, but the supervisors and the reflective team made me feel confident."
- "I became aware that as a psychologist one needs to meet the clients where they are".
- "I've gained more confidence in becoming a psychologist, knowledge about a new area and large respect for the professional psychology practice".
- "I suddenly understood all the professional terms, the tests and how the psychologist had reached her conclusions in an earlier psychological rapport - the development from pure gibberish to comprehensible, professionally well-founded recommendations made a big impression on me".
- "I've now more go-do attitude towards my future labor market"

References

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